

CHINATOWN/INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT

Amendments are recommended to the International District Mixed (IDM) zone in the area of Chinatown/I.D. located generally south of S. Main Street, east of 4th Avenue S. and west of Interstate 5.

CHINATOWN/INTERNATIONAL DISTRICT NEIGHBORHOOD AND SPECIAL REVIEW DISTRICT (ISRD)

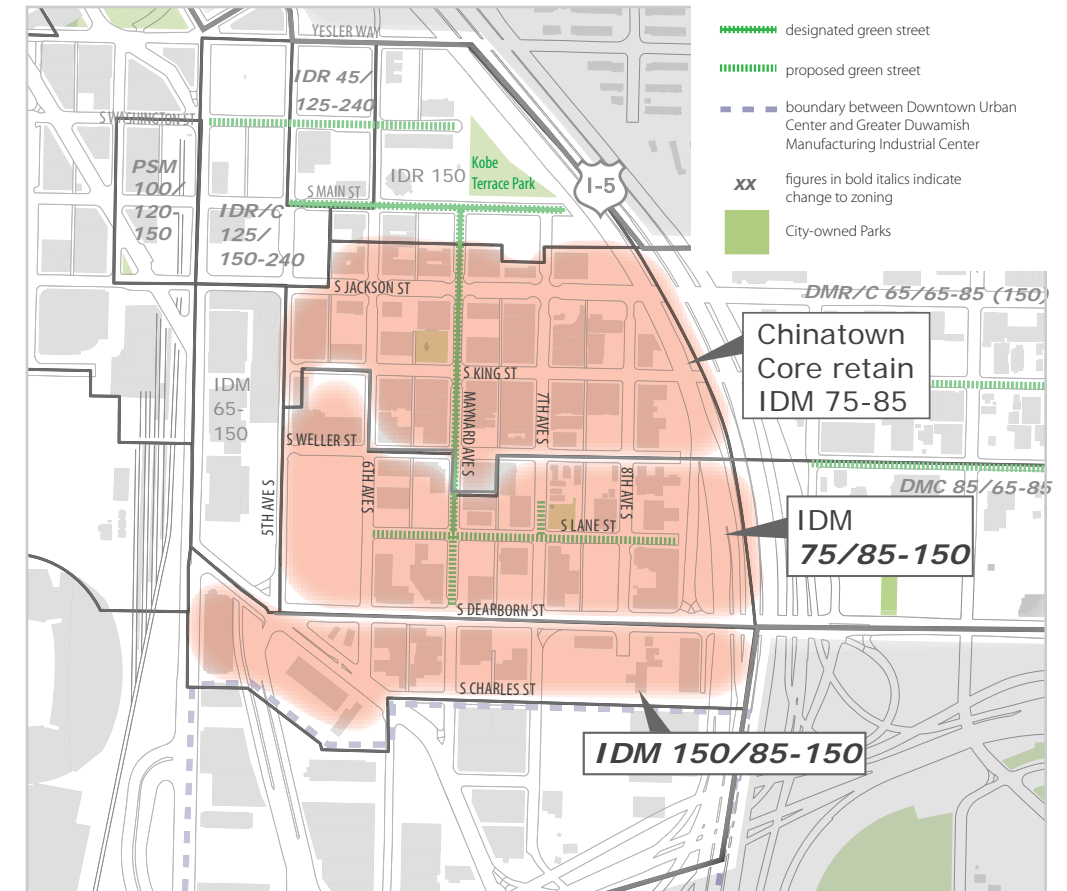
The Chinatown/I.D. neighborhood is a unique historic and cultural treasure. The Chinatown/I.D. Strategic Plan (neighborhood plan, June 1998) describes the district as follows: “We are a community characterized by a sizable elderly population, significant low-income households, and a large number of affordable housing units. We are primarily small businesses as well as social service and community development organizations. We are a delicate social connection for many elderly. We are a regional hub for Asian-Pacific American commerce and culture.”

The neighborhood plan identifies many challenges and assets: anticipated increases in population and housing costs, the impacts of nearby sports stadiums, public safety concerns, and small business and cultural vitality.

Goals from the Neighborhood Plan Chapter of the Comprehensive Plan for Chinatown/I.D. include:

- Thriving businesses, organizations, and cultural institutions;
- A neighborhood with diverse and affordable housing;
- Rehabilitation of substandard and vacant buildings;
- Create safe and dynamic public spaces;
- An accessible neighborhood, with access within and to the neighborhood, for all transportation modes, while encouraging less dependence on cars and greater use of transit, bikes and walking; and
- Seek to reduce auto congestion at key intersections.

Recent City and community investments provide important amenities for future residents. These include the acquisition of a one-quarter block parcel to expand Hing Hay Park, and the recent construction of the Chinatown/International District Community Center and library near the intersection of S. Dearborn Street and 8th Avenue S.



The City is also moving forward on programs to facilitate cleaner, safer alleys in Chinatown/I.D., and allow more liberal use of sidewalks by merchant vendors.

South of South Dearborn Street

An area immediately south of S. Dearborn Street lies within the Chinatown-International District Urban Center Village within the Downtown Urban Center. The area was not a focus of the neighborhood plan, but has received considerable interest and attention from the community in recent years. Current zoning in this area allows large commercial uses and significant amounts of parking. The area south of S. Dearborn Street features a diverse mix of uses and buildings, including:

- A portion of the City's Charles Street Yards (light industrial, City operations);
- The Pang Warehouse site (vacant);
- The Old Popich Sign Company Building (office and art gallery);
- The Salvation Army-William Booth Center (housing);
- The Old Pacific Fish warehouse/Wan Hua (offices);
- The Crescent Manufacturing Company/RDA Building (offices);
- A gas station and convenience store; and
- The former Federal Immigration Services Building (INS Building), listed on the National Register of Historic Places (vacant)

The South Dearborn area, and the industrially-zoned area immediately to the south, were the subject of a comprehensive transportation analysis in 2007. In general, the area's north-south avenues have experienced a drop in

freight traffic. Reduced truck volumes are due to changes in industrial land uses and SR 519 improvements that provide more direct access to I-5 and I-90. Airport Way S. continues to see significant traffic volumes. Larger trucks travel north-south along 7th Avenue S. between S. Dearborn Street and Airport Way S. Similarly, many trucks travel along the eastern portion of S. Dearborn Street between Airport Way S., Interstate 5, and Rainier Avenue S.

EXISTING LAND USE CONTEXT

Special Review District

Similar to Pioneer Square, the Chinatown/International District is a Special Review District that encompasses a broad geographic area (see map). The International Special Review District (ISRD) was established in 1973 to preserve and perpetuate the cultural, economic and historic qualities of the area, particularly the features derived from its Asian heritage. Changes to property in the District, including a change of use or a proposal to alter the exterior appearance of any structure, public right-of-way, or public space within the District must first receive a Certificate of Approval from the Department of Neighborhoods Director, who administers Special Review Districts. Applications for Certificates of Approval are reviewed by a seven member volunteer Board, five of whom are elected by the community and two of whom are appointed by the Mayor. Board members review applications to ensure that proposals are consistent with the District Ordinance (SMC 23.66) and compatible with the ISRD Design Guidelines.



National Register District

The Seattle Chinatown National Register Historic District is a sub-district located within the ISRD. As in Pioneer Square, alterations to features that contribute to the National Register District are reviewed by the Board for consistency with the Secretary of the Interior’s Standards must also adhere to the Seattle Land Use Code and ISRD Design Guidelines. Forty-four buildings within the Chinatown/International District are identified as “primary” or “secondary” structures contributing to the National Register district. Those properties are eligible to apply for benefits including Historic Rehabilitation Tax Credits and donation of a conservation easement.

Objectives of ISRD zoning is to:

- Maintain and protect the International District as an Asian cultural, retail and residential center;
- Allow flexibility and discretion in land use control;
- Protect and promote small businesses;
- Encourage the development of housing;
- Encourage the rehabilitation of existing buildings; and
- Encourage new development that is compatible in scale and character with existing buildings.

IDM Zone

The Land Use Code provisions for International District Mixed (IDM) zones regulate property use and development in the core of the Chinatown/I.D. in several ways: by identifying permitted and prohibited uses, requiring pedestrian-orientation at street-level, setting maximum height limits, among others.

IDR Zones

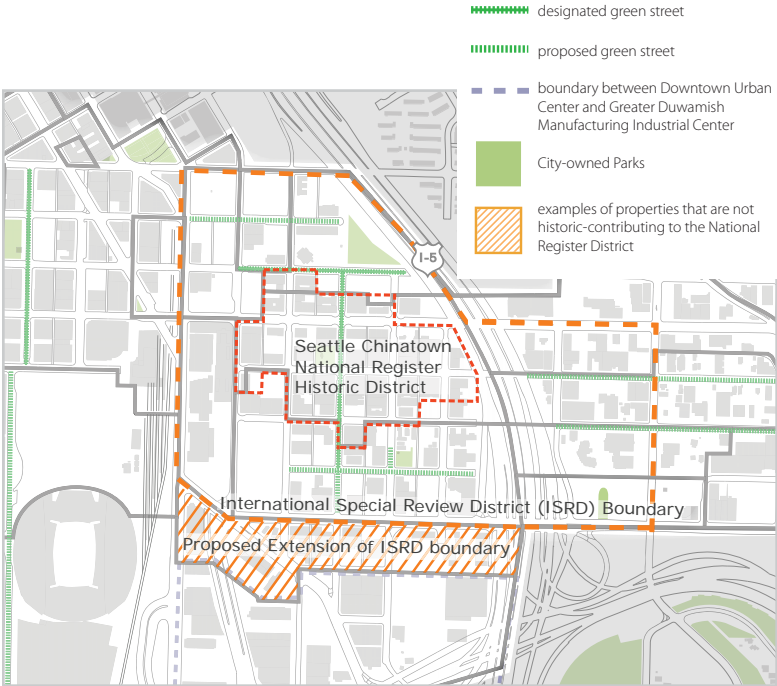
The Land Use Code provisions for International District Residential (IDR) zones regulate properties in the Japan-town area of Chinatown/I.D., as discussed in the Japan-town Chapter of this report.

Asian Design Character District and Retail Core

Specific design standards and use criteria have been enacted in the Land Use Code for a sub-area of the ISRD (see map at right). Within the Asian Design Character District, the Code identifies architectural characteristics intended to “strengthen and preserve the existing Asian architectural character of the Design District.” This sub-area is also the boundary for the “Retail Core,” where pedestrian-oriented retail uses are required at street level with a mix of residential and commercial uses above the street level. The Special Review District Board evaluates development applications against these design standards and street-level use standards.

Commercial 2 (C2) Zone

Zoning in the area south of S. Dearborn Street is C2, a zone generally characterized by larger auto-oriented commercial establishments such as manufacturing or warehouse uses. Residential uses are allowed only through conditional use approval. These are the only C2 zoned blocks within the Downtown Urban Center.



OBJECTIVES FOR FUTURE LAND USE

Planning objectives for the Chinatown/International District and strategies to meet these objectives are described below:

1. Preserve historic and cultural resources and encourage revitalization of historic buildings
 - Retaining existing development capacity within the National Register Historic District while expanding capacity elsewhere in South Downtown will help to reduce redevelopment pressure on historic buildings and ensure a complementary scale of development on adjacent properties.
 - The South Downtown Historic Transfer of Development Rights (TDR) and Transfer of Development Potential (TDP) programs will encourage preservation of historic buildings and direct resources toward their rehabilitation. (See page 86 for a description of these programs.)
 - An on-site historic bonus could apply in limited circumstances when a new development is located on the same lot as a historic-contributing structure within IDM and IDR zones.
2. Protect existing affordable housing and plan for future affordable units.
 - The incentive zoning program will help to produce affordable workforce housing throughout South Downtown.
 - The Housing TDR program will allow available floor area from sending sites in South Downtown to be calculated in a manner more similar to other downtown zones (see page 89).
 - The highest recommended heights of 240 feet in Chinatown/I.D. will not apply to areas where affordable housing exists. This will help to minimize redevelopment pressure on those sites.
3. Provide opportunities for the development of a dense residential mixed-use community south of the neighborhood core, and provide a transition from the core of the Chinatown/I.D. to non-residential employment uses located south of S. Dearborn Street.
 - Proposals would increase the maximum height limit to 150 feet for residential uses south of the Chinatown/I.D. core area.
 - Proposed development standards in the 150 foot zoned areas are intended to ensure a scale of development consistent with the residential/mixed use neighborhood.
4. Enhance the pedestrian environment.
 - The ISRD is recommended to be extended to encompass the blocks immediately south of S. Dearborn Street. Rezoning this area from Commercial 2 (C2) to a pedestrian-oriented IDM zone will allow both compatible residential and commercial densities.
 - Continue to require pedestrian-oriented street level uses in the retail core.
 - Designate certain streets outside the retail core as “pedestrian” to ensure a pedestrian-oriented street.
 - A greater diversity of street level uses outside the retail core, including ground-level residential units or ground-level retail would be allowed.
5. Provide open space to support increased density and integration with surrounding neighborhood areas.
 - Establish open space TDR and TDP programs in South Downtown as a method to gain extra floor area. Provide the option of creating neighborhood open space amenities within South Downtown as a method to gain extra residential floor area.
 - Designate certain streets as “green streets” to encourage the development of informal open spaces over time.

PROPOSED ZONING IN THE CHINATOWN/I.D. CORE

Retain existing IDM 75-85 zoning

The Seattle Chinatown National Register Historic District is a compact area with a concentration of historic and cultural resources. The forty-four properties that are identified as being “primary” and “secondary” contributing to the National Register District are located within an approximate nine-block area.

The Livable South Downtown EIS concluded that allowing additional height in this area could negatively impact historic resources for two reasons:

- Height over 100 feet would be incompatible with the lower height of historic buildings in this area; and
- Significant increases in zoned height could result in economic pressure to demolish and replace existing historic buildings, particularly those in need of substantial rehabilitation.

Encouraging the rehabilitation of existing structures is one of the primary goals and objectives of the ISRD. As such, demolition of contributing properties within the district boundaries is strongly discouraged. Demolition of structures within the ISRD requires a Certificate of Approval from the City. Factors considered when reviewing a request for demolition include the economic, social and physical consequences and benefits of the requested demolition, as well as any alternatives to demolition that may exist.



A common reason to request demolition is the cost involved in renovation. At least eight historic buildings are partially vacant and/or in need of substantial repairs, including seismic retrofit. These buildings are most vulnerable to economic pressure to demolish. A separate City effort is under way to work with owners of the most vulnerable historic buildings to encourage or require seismic retrofit and repair.

In order to encourage preservation of existing historic buildings and affordable housing in this area, several programs are recommended. Lots that contain structures that contribute to the historic or cultural character of the district as determined by Department of Neighborhoods Director after consultation with the International Special Review District Board will be candidates for participation in either the South Downtown Historic TDR program (commercial development capacity) or the South Downtown TDP program (residential development capacity). Under proposed

changes to the TDR program commercial floor area equal to 3 FAR may be transferred. A total of 6 FAR of all types of TDR and TDP may be transferred from any lot. These programs do not depend upon additional zoned height in this area.

Other IDM zoning requirements within this area include:

- Buildings allowed up to 85 feet in height if at least 50 percent of the gross floor area, excluding parking, is in residential use. Other buildings are limited to 75 feet in height;
- Commercial uses limited to 3 FAR (see glossary on page 106 to better understand these concepts), except that hotels are allowed up to 6 FAR; and
- Residential uses are not subject to floor area limits, consistent with the IDM zone emphasis on housing above ground floor commercial uses.

Chinatown/International District Historic Core

Children's Park depicted

Historic TDR/TDP will allow transfer of development capacity to encourage renovation and upgrades of historic buildings

Retain incentives for residential use

Retain boundaries and requirements of the National Register Historic District, Asian Design Character District, Retail Core District, and ID Special Review District



S. Lane Green Street

Maynard Green Street

Require street-level pedestrian uses and amenities

Hing-Hay park expansion depicted

Retain 85' height limit in scale with existing historic buildings

This depiction is presented for illustration purposes only. White structures depict existing buildings

MAKERS
architectural planning urban design

Proposed Zoning in Chinatown/I.D. South of S. Weller Street: IDM 75/85-150

The intent of the recommended IDM 75/85-150 zone is to accommodate residential/mixed-use density in this under-developed area south of the historic ID core. The South Downtown Advisory Group and the Vision 2030 recommendations (described in the introduction to this report) identified this area as appropriate for higher residential density with pedestrian-oriented design and amenities at street level. Economic analysis conducted in 2006 determined that new development to heights of 150 feet or greater would be feasible in this area. Increased density in the southern portion of Chinatown/I.D. will infuse the neighborhood with a round-the-clock residential presence to balance nearby regional services and provide for enhanced public safety through additional “eyes on the street.”

Proposals applicable to this area include:

- Rezone the area zoned International District Mixed (IDM) 75-85 to International District Mixed (IDM) 75/85-150.
- Retain the existing boundaries for the ISRD, Asian Design Character District, and retail core.
- Retain a base height limit of 75 feet for commercial uses and 85 feet for residential uses; allow hotels at any height within applicable floor area (FAR) limits.
- Allow building heights greater than 75 feet if 50% of the gross floor area of the building, excluding parking, is in residential use.

Upper Level Setbacks:

- South of S. Weller Street: average upper level setback of 15 feet above 45 feet in height for buildings taller than 85 feet.
- North of S. Weller Street and west of 6th Avenue S.: average upper-level setback of 15 feet above 85 feet in height.
- Green Streets: a continuous upper-level setback of 20 feet above 45 feet in height.

Façade Modulation:

- Structures taller than 85 feet: for any façade longer than 110 feet, a portion of the façade must set back a minimum depth of 15 feet for a minimum length of 30 feet above 45 feet.



Chinatown/International District: South of S. Weller Street Area and South of Dearborn Blocks





Proposed Zoning South of S. Dearborn Street: IDM 150/85-150

The area south of S. Dearborn Street is a transition area from central Chinatown neighborhoods to the industrial former tidelands to the south. A description of these blocks is found on page 46 of this report. Proposed zoning will allow the area to continue to function as a transition between residential/mixed use areas to the north and commercial/industrial areas to the south. Future development would focus pedestrian travel along Maynard Avenue S. toward the Stadium Light Rail Station while allowing continued truck and vehicle access. Proposed actions for this area are:

- Extend the ISRD to this area.
- Rezone from Commercial 2/85 to International District Mixed 150/85-150
- Retain a base height of 85 feet for residential uses; commercial uses are provided more flexibility and are regulated through FAR.
- Establish a base floor area for commercial uses of 3 FAR and a maximum of 6 FAR through incentive zoning.
- Allow unlimited residential density up to 150 feet in height through incentive zoning.
- Designate Maynard Avenue S. as a Class II pedestrian street to require transparency (windows) and landscaping, and limit blank façades.
- Incorporate upper level setbacks and façade modulation to help ensure compatibility with the surrounding neighborhood, access to light and air, and interest in and diversity in upper level building design, as follows:

Upper Level Setbacks and Modulation

- For any façade longer than 110 feet, a portion of the façade must set back a minimum depth of 10 feet for a minimum length of 30 feet above 65 feet.
- Along Maynard Avenue S.: average upper level setback of 15 feet above 45 feet in height for buildings taller than 85 feet.



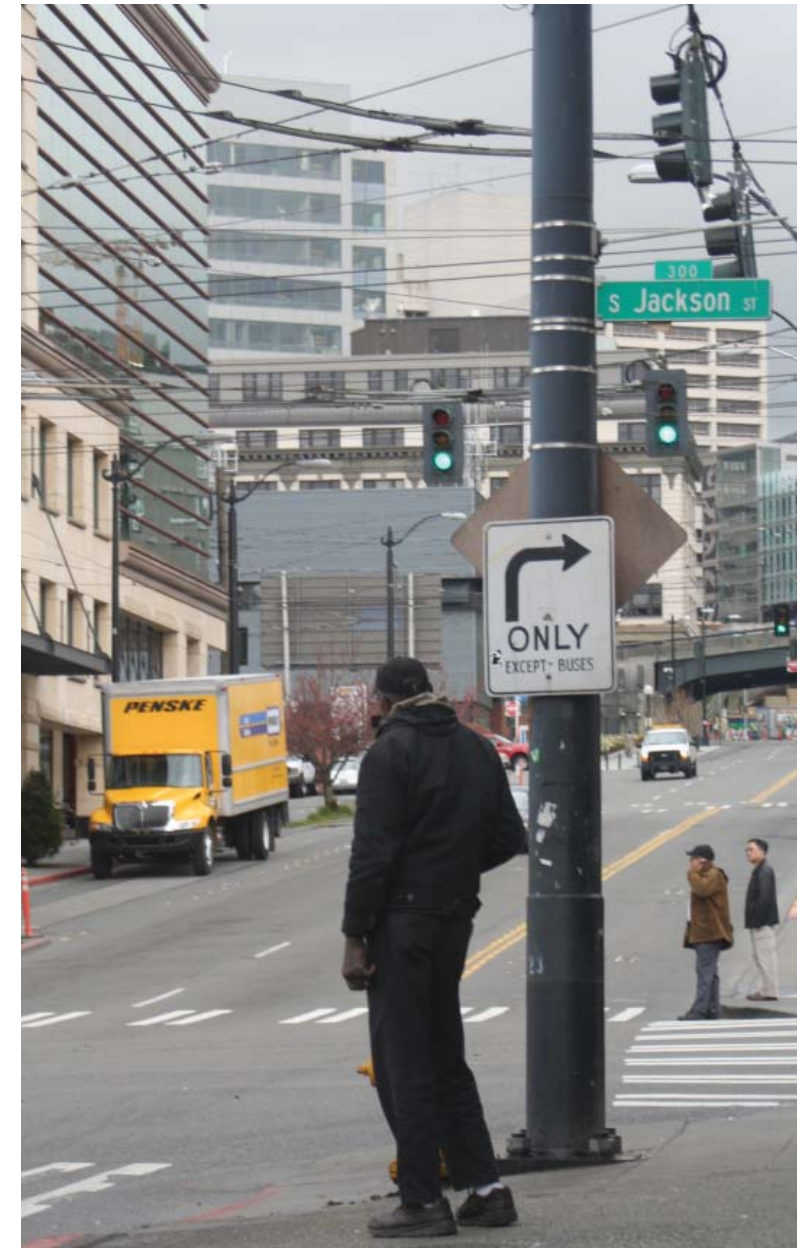
The Pedestrian-Orientation of Streets Outside the Core

Within the ISRD, street-level uses and building designs are regulated through a combination of provisions that apply in the underlying Downtown zone and provisions that apply specifically to the ISRD.

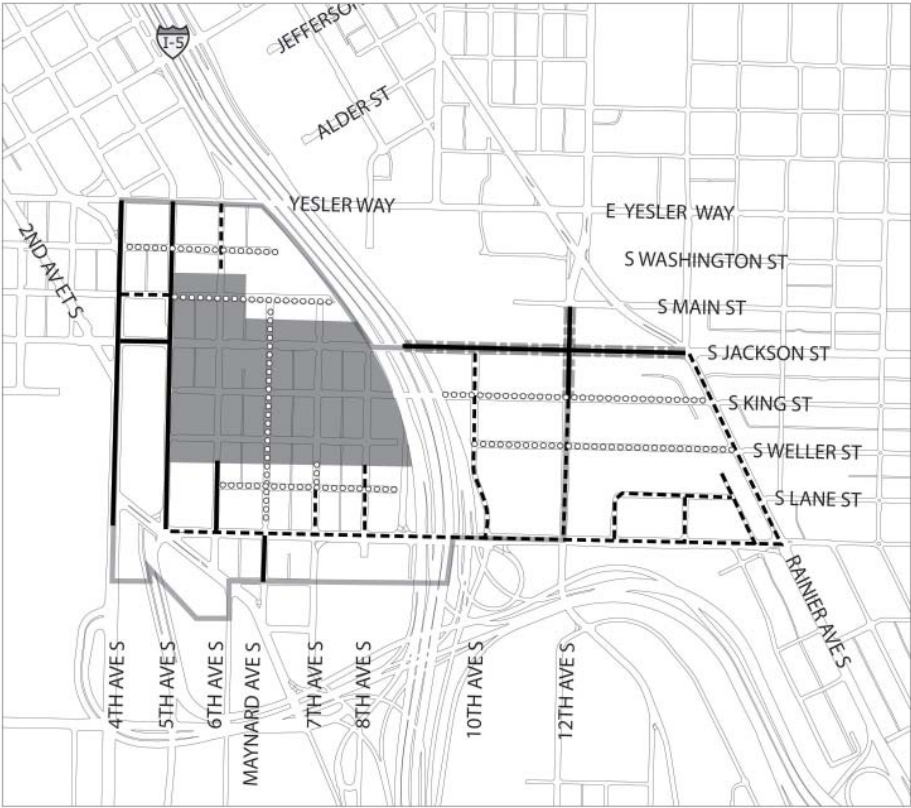
Within the central retail core/Asian Character District identified on Map B for 23.66.326 (see page 36), street-level use requirements and design standards are intended to create a pedestrian-oriented retail district.

The ISRD Board expressed interest in regulations that will help to ensure that future buildings will:

- Provide visual interest at street level;
- Contribute to a continuous pedestrian street-frontage within the district;
- Integrate with surrounding pedestrian networks;
- Ensure that parking within buildings does not disrupt the pedestrian environment;
- Integrate landscaping and street trees; and
- Avoid creating areas that are isolated and encourage legitimate pedestrian activity at many hours of the day.



Map B for 23.66.326 International District



After community review and taking into account community concerns, the following recommendations are proposed:

Designate Pedestrian Streets

Outside the ISRD core, certain streets are recommended to be identified as “Class I Pedestrian” or “Class II Pedestrian” as identified on Map B for the ISRD. Development along streets with a pedestrian designation are subject to design and use standards that help create a pedestrian-oriented street front. The following sections of the Land Use Code are recommended to apply to pedestrian-designated streets in the International District:

Code Section	Regulates:
23.49.019.B	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Parking Location within Structures▪ Parking at street level is not allowed on Class I pedestrian streets and green streets. Standards regulating upper-level parking within structures apply to all buildings.
23.49.019. H	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Access to Parking▪ Access to parking is discouraged on Class I pedestrian streets and green streets.
23.49.162.C	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Transparency required▪ Defined as “clear or lightly tinted glass in windows, doors, and display windows...that allow views into the structure from the outside,” transparency is required along pedestrian-designated street frontages.
23.49.162.D	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Blank facades limits▪ Any portion of a façade that is not transparent is considered to be a blank façade. The length of walls not enhanced by “architectural detailing, artwork, landscaping, or similar features that have visual interest” is limited on pedestrian-designated streets.
23.49.162.F	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Landscaping▪ Street trees and landscaping in the right-of-way is required on all streets.
23.66.326	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Street-level uses▪ Within the retail core, small-scale pedestrian-oriented retail businesses are identified as preferred uses. Outside the retail core, a wider variety of uses are permitted at street level. It is recommended that street-level retail uses be required along 25% of the street frontage of commercial-only buildings outside the retail core north of S. Dearborn Street, subject to review by the ISRD Board.

Regulating Signs

The ISRD Board is responsible for reviewing applications for sign permits within the ISRD. Members of the board recently requested amendments to existing code provisions for business identification signs. Currently, Land Use Code Section 23.66.338 identifies permitted size and placement of signs. Comments from the board and from members of the community indicate that the current regulations are difficult to interpret. Amendments will replace a lengthy table identifying permitted sign size with provisions that are similar to those in Pioneer Square. The recommended regulations would identify the basis of review by the Board in a manner that would better relate to the goals and objectives of the ISRD. This method of review will provide greater flexibility to allow for many kinds of signs as long as they are visually compatible with the International District.

Onsite Historic Bonus in IDM/IDR Zones

In circumstances where a historic-contributing structure is located on the same lot as a new construction project, a historic bonus may be used within IDM and IDR zones. The bonus is calculated as equivalent of the rehabilitated floor area of the historic-contributing structure, and may be applied to the non-affordable housing incentive zoning obligation in new projects. See page 83.

Summary of
Proposed Base and Maximum Height Limits and Floor Area Ratios (FAR)

Zone	Base Height and FAR Limits	Maximum Height and FAR Limits
IDM 75-85	75 feet 3 FAR commercial uses, except hotels 6 FAR hotels Residential uses not subject to an FAR limit.	Non-residential uses: 75 feet 3 FAR commercial uses, except hotels 6 FAR hotels Residential uses: 85 feet; mixed-use building must include at least 50% residential uses. Residential uses not subject to an FAR limit.
IDM 75/85-150	75 feet 3 FAR commercial uses, except hotels 6 FAR hotels Residential uses: Residential uses not subject to an FAR limit.	150 feet 3 FAR commercial uses, except hotels 6 FAR hotels Residential use not subject to an FAR limit. For buildings that exceed 75 feet: at least 50% of the floor area must be in residential use, and building must gain extra floor area through incentive zoning Hotel uses are allowed up to 150' in height. However 50% of the building must be in residential use.
IDM 150/85-150	Commercial uses: 3 FAR non-residential (commercial) at 150 feet Residential uses: 85 feet Residential uses not subject to an FAR limit.	150 feet for all uses 6 FAR commercial uses Residential use not subject to an FAR limit Maximum height and FAR are an option for projects that participate in the incentive zoning